

**John Motley, Board Member, Achievement First Hartford Academy
Appropriations Committee Hearing, March 24, 2011**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, vice chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee.

Good evening. My name is John Motley, and I am a resident of the city of Hartford, a former administrator at the Hartford Public Schools and former President of St. Paul Travelers Foundation. I am currently Chairman of the Hartford School Building Committee and Treasurer for the Achievement First Hartford Academy. I don't list my current and former titles because I want to impress you. I list them because a common theme runs among them: a commitment to children and a desire to see them succeed.

I'm here to speak in strong support of SB 1195, which would fund students based on their needs, not their address or the school they attend. To me, this is common sense: Not only is it a logical approach to ensuring children are allotted the resources they need to receive the quality education they deserve, it is a call to action for every school to step up their game, honor their commitment to children and raise the bar.

When it comes to education funding, too often the argument has been about how much a district stands to lose, not what our children stand to gain. Too often the debate has been about charter schools initially stating they could do more with less, instead of recognizing how much more they have done in terms of closing the achievement gap. Too often the dialogue has been about the impact on adults rather than the effects on children. Isn't it time to change the conversation?

Earlier this week, I attended a board meeting at Achievement First's Hartford middle school. The academic dean provided data indicating that only 7 percent of scholars who joined us in fifth grade were reading at or above grade level. Today, those scholars are in seventh grade – and 60 percent of them are reading at or above grade level. Those are the kinds of numbers we should be talking about. That is the kind of impact we should care about.

As members of the Appropriations Committee, I realize you are facing a daunting challenge. The budget deficit looms at around \$3.7 billion, and everyone is being asked to share the sacrifice. And even though I don't think children should ever, ever be part of a sacrifice strategy, this bill does not even impact the state's budget. What it does accomplish is make sure that the \$7 billion we spend on education in this state is distributed fairly. It supports quality education choice by attaching the appropriate resources to each child and prevents over-funding schools that are failing our children. In essence, it puts an end to a system that has hindered our children's success.

I ask you to support SB 1195 not only for the children's faces I see each day in Hartford, but for every child who deserves the chance to realize his or her dreams.

Thank you.